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## Talmage Sermon

By Rev. Frank De Witt Talmage, D. D.

Los Angeles, Cal., May 14.—That the secret of success and the causes of failure, moral and material, lie in the foundations of character is shown in this sermon. The text is Luke xiv, 30, "This man began to build and was not able to finish."

"What is the matter with your block of houses?" I asked one of my church officers some time ago when walking along the Chicago streets. "I came to this city at least four years ago. Then the walls were up. The floors in many of the houses were laid. The buildings then seemed almost ready for the plasterers. Why this vast amount of money lying idle? It must be worth at least \$10,000 a year as interest. It would have been far better to have laid no foundation and erected no walls and allowed the land to be turned into the city streets in that state."

"I know it," answered my friend, "but the owner of those buildings overreached himself. When the buildings were half completed his money ran out. Then, on account of his debts, all his properties were thrown by litigation into the city courts. Now I do not know what is to be the outcome. Anyway, he cannot go on unless he gets out of his present difficulties. His property must still lie idle in this incomplete form."

"What is the purpose of those two mammoth ships?" I asked a naval friend some years ago while we were walking through the Brooklyn navy yard. "Why," said he, "those are the sheds erected over two immense hulls of half completed warships. During the civil war the navy department was building as many and as large ships as it could, but as soon as the Appomattox peace agreement was signed the work was stopped upon those two vessels. The government had at that time no use for them. Now they are lying there, rotting away. The wood will be used for nothing but kindling, as the plans upon which those keels were laid are already obsolete."

"Incomplete beginnings" were both the Chicago houses and the navy yard ships. We do not have to go clear back to Bible times to find illustrations for my text. We can see them everywhere around us in our present day and generation.

We have a right to draw new illustrations and up to date applications for this sermon theme. Indeed, the fresher and more modern the applications the better. The reason why this simile of my text made an overwhelming impression upon Christ's hearers was that it was an object lesson near at hand. When Christ was seated in the fishing smack upon the waters of Lake Galilee and said, "Behold, here went out a sower to sow," he looked off upon the hillside overhanging the lake and pointed to a farmer scattering his seed upon the rich soil of the east. In the same way legend tells that when Christ spoke these words of my text he pointed to the half constructed walls of a tower which Pilate, the governor, had begun to build, overlooking one of the Jerusalem aqueducts, and had left in an incomplete state. There it stood, a powerful object lesson, showing that what one commences in life one should carry on to its full completion. So today I would draw my illustrations from every whither. I would find them in the home, the store, the factory, in the church and on the street. I would find them in your life as well as in mine.

**Half Built Towers of Life.**  
The half built towers of life have a modern application in the average schoolroom education. They can be found in the preparations with which many of us were sent forth to the struggle of life. They are especially found in the snattering of French lessons and painting and music and aesthetic culture in which some sisters and daughters are being dipped for a few months a year on the principle that the more outward color of the dye decides whether or no the garment is closely woven and of good wearing quality. They are the "incomplete beginnings" of the schools and colleges which often send a young man or a young woman forth into the world knowing a little of everything and not any one study perfectly. They make their students know a little of astronomy, a little of chemistry, a little of Greek, a little of mathematics, a little of mythology, a little of archeology, a little of mechanics, a little of electricity, a little of this, and that and the other thing and yet not well versed in any one subject or along any one line of work. What true education should do is to teach a man to do at least one thing as well as any one else could do it and not to know many things poorly. "Jack of all trades is master of none."

I would illustrate my thought with a reference to a remarkable speech which Charles Francis Adams delivered some years ago before the Phi Beta Kappa society of the Harvard university. The title of this address was "A College Education." In it Mr. Adams denounced the absurd course of study which many colleges demand of students in years of work over Greek and Latin and the classics, utterly ignoring practical studies for everyday life. "How did Harvard college prepare me and my ninety-two classmates of the year 1850 for our work of life?" he asked. "In answering the question it is not altogether easy to preserve one's gravity. The college fitted us for this active, bustling, hard hitting, many tongued world, caring nothing for authority and little for the past, but full of its living thoughts and living issues, in dealing with which there was no man who did not stand in pressing and constant need of every possible preparation as respects knowledge and exactitude and thoroughness—the poor old college prepared us to play our parts in this world by compelling us, directly or indirectly, to devote the best part of our school lives to acquiring a confessedly superficial knowledge of two dead languages." Such is the testimony of Charles Francis Adams in reference to one of the educational fetiches of our college life. Such, on a broader scale, are the fetiches in reference to the education of the average young man or woman of today.

Let us take the average young man on commencement day. The foundations of the educational towers have been laid. "Young man, what can you do?" asks the hard headed world. "Are you an expert in any one line? Are you a capable mining engineer? Are you a first class advertising agent? Can you sell goods? Are you an authority as a real estate man? What can you do?" "Nothing," says the young man. "I am willing to do anything, but I do not know a trade. I have not become proficient in any one line of work. But I am willing to do what I am told to do." "That is not enough. To be willing is not necessarily to be capable. What can you do?"

**The Wheel of Fortune.**  
The wheel of fortune turns. The daughters, brought up in luxury, have to go on and make a living. Can you cope? Are you an expert stenographer? Have you papers which signify that you are a well trained nurse or schoolteacher or dressmaker? Are you enough of an authority on French to become a translator, or are you a proofreader, a master hand as a musician or a capable artist? The questions which face you, O woman, are these: "What can you do thoroughly and well? On what subject can you speak as an authority? Half built towers are unsalable houses. Half built ships are absolutely useless to brave the tornadoes of the Atlantic ocean. What can you do? What can you do? What one thing can you do as well as if not better than any one else?"

But the half built educational towers are not to be condemned nearly as much as the deserted, half built enterprises of life which we see everywhere around us. It was only here and there that a man or woman in the past had an opportunity to get a complete education. The higher schools of our nation, the others were few and far between. Besides that, even if there were fine schools in the past all children were not able to go to them. Perhaps you were like my grandfather. He was the oldest of a large family and help work the farm that the younger members of the family might have enough bread to eat and enough clothing to wear. Thus the only education you received outside of the three "R's" was out of the "University of Hard Knocks." But in spite of this handicap, my friend, you have a good mind, a good heart, and you have had a good many of the essential capabilities of success. Now, why have you been such a failure? Why is your life in its uselessness to be likened unto that half built tower which Pilate, the governor, erected and toward which Christ pointed when he spoke the words of my text? I will tell the reason. You went to work and worked hard. You developed yourself along one line. You laid your foundations; but just when you pleted your walls, but just when you were about to complete your work and win success you deserted the line of work you were following and went to dig in some other field to build another kind of tower.

**Did Not Stick to It.**  
Is not this emphatically true with you in business? What are you doing today? "Oh," you answer, "I am in the mining business. Some of my friends and myself have a dozen claims up in the new gold fields. I am bound soon to be rich. There is no doubt about it. We are within a quarter of a mile of one mine where they have taken out \$1,000,000 in one year. We are on the same vein or line of ore. We are bound to get rich. Will you take some stock in our mine? You can get rich too." No, I thank you. In the first place, I have no money to invest; in the second, if I had I would not invest it in your mine. You are almost certain to make a failure out of it. If there is no gold there, then, of course, you cannot get "blood out of a turnip." If there is any gold there you will let go of it before you develop that mine properly. Some one else will get it first. How do I know? Why, that has been your record for twenty-five years. In the last quarter of a century you have dabbled in at least ten different businesses, at any one of which you could have made a success if you had only stuck to it. For five years you worked a ranch or a farm. After those five years you said: "There is no need of me burying my talents here. I must get out into some other business where I can make some money." You got out. How is it with the man who bought your place? He has made a success on your farm because he put his brain into it and developed it and ran it along the line it could pay. After you left the farm you went into the real estate business. Then what was the matter? "Oh," you say, "there was no money in the real estate business. I got out of that very soon."

Yes, you speak the truth. There was no money in the real estate business for you. You are sure of making a failure at everything. But there was money and there is money in the real estate business for the man who took your offices. He had no more capital to start with than you had, but he hung on until at last the financial tide turned his way. Today he is one of the wealthy men of this city. Then you failed as a life insurance agent. Next you failed as a commercial traveler. You have failed at everything you touched. Yet men no braver than you who followed you have made such fourfold, one-half, two-thirds, three-fourths of your walls. Then you said: "Let the unfinished towers stand. I am too discouraged to climb any higher. I will go and dig elsewhere."

But I would not halt here. The completed towers of life are due to grit and grit. They are due to more than that. Their foundation stones, their excavations, their walls, are built by character as well.

Had all the proper mental preparation for life and perseverance enough in his makeup to tear down a stone wall with his bare fingers if it were possible for him so to do. But, on the other hand, many a man has lost all simply because his character could not stand the test of truth and justice. No matter how strong and stanch a ship may be, if it has no rudder that ship becomes a plaything of every current and a menace to all ships sailing the seas. No matter how swift a locomotive, if it has no indicator to its boiler that engine is momentarily in danger of blowing up. No matter how high the walls of a tower lift themselves, if those walls are not erected on a solid base and in a straight line they are in danger of toppling over. What the rudder is to the ship, the indicator to the engine, the plumb line to the mason building the wall, character is to man. It is his ballast, his sheet anchor, his safety valve, his protector, his all.

**A Sad Example.**  
Let me illustrate my thought by the sad and yet brilliant life of one of the greatest statesmen England ever produced. Charles James Fox was one of the greatest geniuses who ever stood in the British house of commons. At twenty-one years of age he was ranked among the ablest debaters and at thirty had not superior or equal in all Europe. But, though at times he was the most applauded man in Europe, yet he never could win the confidence of the people. They admired his intellect, but they could not trust his heart. His daily custom was to rise just in time to stroll down to the parliament house. "This night," as a contemporary wrote, "he would bill be attacking arguments for a bill he was attacking greater and more powerful than any of his adversaries could force. Then he would take these arguments to pieces as though they were cotton threads." Read his speeches on the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Read his masterpiece on the "Rejection of Napoleon's Overtures." After parliament adjourned then would come a round of debauch. Gambling with him was a mad passion. He was both spendthrift and libertine. "How can he guard his king's finances," asked the people, "when he cannot protect his own pocketbook?" Charles James Fox had every qualification to make himself the political dictator of Europe save the single essential of character, the lack of which destroyed his whole career for practical good.

But you do not have to go back to history to prove the truth of my statement that character is one of the great builders of the towers of life and that without true character no tower of life can be built. When one of their ambassadors, Hexagon by name, came to Rome to prove to the consuls that no poisonous serpent could kill him, he allowed himself to be placed in a bed surrounded by swarms of wriggling, death dealing adders. But, though Hexagon could sleep among poisonous serpents, no true Christian can build a spiritual watchtower with the poisonous serpent of sin clasped around his breast and heart. Are you ready, O man, to give up that sin, that pet sin, which has been the ruin of your life? This is a call from God to you. In the far east the Mohammedan mosques are flanked by minarets, or tall watchtowers. There at certain hours of the day the priests come, and upon these watchtowers they cry aloud: "Come to prayers! Come to prayers! All ye children, come to prayers!" Then the Mohammedans, no matter where they may be, whether as Arabs in the desert, princes and princesses in their palaces, merchants in their streets or laborers in the streets, kneel, bow their heads to the ground and pray. Oh, my friends, shall the call of the Mohammedan priests in the minarets of the far east have a more potent influence over Mohammed's disciples than this call of service and consecration which Christ makes to us? Will you offer to Christ your heart? Will you give to him your unremitting service? Will you come to him with clean hands and a clean, moral life?

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**A Fatal Gift.**  
But is there no direct lesson from this characterless tower for the women as well as the men? How is it, O woman, with the most brilliant friend of your childhood days? You see her now, a perfect dream of beauty. As a little girl her teeth were a collection of priceless pearls. When she laughed all the sunshine of the heavens seemed to dance in her blue eyes. Her dimples looked like the eddies in the surface of a mountain brook. Her hair could be likened unto nuggets of gold were it not for the fact that, like that of Miriam of old, each curl had dancing feet that never kept still. Her hands were perfect hands, her feet perfect feet. Then her mind—it was so clear and bright and sparkling and witty and resourceful! What became of her? Where is she? You mention her name now with hushed lips and downcast eyes. Theasop of sin placed one fatal fang about one side of her heart and another fang about the other side of her heart and bit until she died. She destroyed her own life.

Yes, but, like Cleopatra, she not only destroyed an Antony, but she destroyed the lives of scores of other men who would today have been noble husbands and fathers and honored citizens of this commonwealth but for her evil influence. Lack of true moral character destroyed her. Ah, yes, brain power and perseverance alone do not build the strong, high towers of life. If we do not admire Satan we must at least, as a speaker once said, "grant that he is persevering."

This parable was spoken by Christ to teach a spiritual lesson as well as a temporal one. If to make a great earthly success we must consecrate our brains, our bodies and life to that particular work, how much more, then, must we consecrate our minds and hearts to Jesus Christ to help in the spiritual work of upbuilding his kingdom? If we must have preparation and perseverance and true moral worth to build the walls of a temporal tower, how much more must we have true preparation and perseverance and moral character to build the walls of our spiritual structure? "If any man," says Christ in the verse preceding this parable, "hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters—yes, and his own life also—he cannot be my disciple." That means "if a man is not willing to give up all for Christ then Christ can be none of his." Are you and I ready to make this sacrifice, to build our spiritual watchtowers today? Are we ready to make the necessary preparations?

**Perseverance In Building.**  
We opened this sermon behind the schoolroom desk of the teacher. Are you and I ready to go and sit at Christ's feet and learn of him? Are we ready to accept his teachings and receive him as our Saviour? Christ says,

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He says again, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Are not Christ's words clear enough upon this subject? Are we ready to make the necessary preparations for the building of our spiritual watchtowers by becoming one with him through the atonement of the cross? Having accepted Christ after we have laid the foundations of our watchtowers, are we going to persevere in the building? We have read that Thomas A. Edison becomes so absorbed when working on a great invention that he will shut himself up in his laboratory and stay there for days and weeks. He will not leave his office even for his meals, but has them brought to him. We have been told that when George Westinghouse was perfecting his famous car brake he could talk about nothing else. When he walked along the Pittsburgh streets and would meet a friend out of his pocket at once would come the patent. On the street he would talk and talk to prove that his brake was feasible. We have read how the great workers, the great inventors, the great artists, those who have won the great successes of the world, have thought nothing of giving up ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years of perseverance to the accomplishment of their life's purpose. Shall we not be willing to give the same perseverance to the service of Christ?

Lastly, we must offer to Jesus more than proper preparation and perseverance. Can we bring to his service a true character? Or a spotless moral life? Ah, I think this last is the rub with many of us! The reason our spiritual towers are only half completed is that we are not willing to give up our pet sins. The younger Pliny wrote a strange, weird account of the tribe of Payili. They were immune to the poison of snake bites because all their lives they were accustomed to handle these poisonous serpents as pets. They fondled them and put them to sleep with their little children. When one of their ambassadors, Hexagon by name, came to Rome to prove to the consuls that no poisonous serpent could kill him, he allowed himself to be placed in a bed surrounded by swarms of wriggling, death dealing adders. But, though Hexagon could sleep among poisonous serpents, no true Christian can build a spiritual watchtower with the poisonous serpent of sin clasped around his breast and heart. Are you ready, O man, to give up that sin, that pet sin, which has been the ruin of your life? This is a call from God to you. In the far east the Mohammedan mosques are flanked by minarets, or tall watchtowers. There at certain hours of the day the priests come, and upon these watchtowers they cry aloud: "Come to prayers! Come to prayers! All ye children, come to prayers!" Then the Mohammedans, no matter where they may be, whether as Arabs in the desert, princes and princesses in their palaces, merchants in their streets or laborers in the streets, kneel, bow their heads to the ground and pray. Oh, my friends, shall the call of the Mohammedan priests in the minarets of the far east have a more potent influence over Mohammed's disciples than this call of service and consecration which Christ makes to us? Will you offer to Christ your heart? Will you give to him your unremitting service? Will you come to him with clean hands and a clean, moral life?

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Agents—W. H. PRUITT, Temperanceville; E. J. WINDER, Onancock; G. W. ANDRELL, Belle Haven; BIRD & DRUMMOND, Grandview; LYDIA SMITH, Pangotague.

**THE**  
**Cyclone Churn Power.**

L. C. Garret, the sole owner of the Cyclone Churn for the State of Virginia, has sold to Turlington Bros., Fair Oaks, Va., the exclusive right for Eastern Shore of Va. They will continue to canvas the two counties at an early date. Parties wishing one before their agent calls will please notify them and same will be forwarded to their nearest station. This churn is in over 600 families of the Eastern Shore, Va. Farmers, merchants, mechanics and the most economical thinking people, all speak its praise. Come to the Fair and give us your order.

**Turlington Bros.,**  
Fair Oaks, Va.  
N. B. The Cyclone Churn has paid the Government for its patent right and any infringement on same will